

TEAM PLAYER

 How to improve personnel management and your career



GOOD AND BAD TEAM LEADERS

Could your negative thoughts be hindering your company's success? Here's how good and bad energy affects your organisation's bottom line.

By Annette B. Czernik

In these times of fast-moving change and troubled economies, company executives are increasingly challenged to find new and effective ways to energise and engage their employees to ensure collaboration across regions and divisions and achieve sustainable business success. Whether or not they succeed ultimately depends on good leadership.

Leadership is a conscious act of energetic purpose which can be described as the directing, focusing, or shaping of energy towards a desired objective. Skilful leaders sense which type of energy is present in their organisation and know how to use it to facilitate change, enable growth and empower their teams to achieve the company's objectives. They also utilise this knowledge to find the best opportunities to educate employees, develop commitment and promote capabilities. As such, positive leadership energy is one of the most valuable assets required by corporate leaders today.

DEFINING ENERGY: A NEW TAKE ON AN OLD THEORY

Albert Einstein's theorem $E = mc^2$ has forever defined our understanding of the way the world works. He showed us that energy and mass are not distinct physical realities; they are actually one and the same. Everything we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell is energy. On a cellular level, energy is categorised as either catabolic (breaking down) or anabolic (building up). Taking this scientific understanding up to an organisational level, a leader's catabolic (destructive) or anabolic (constructive) energy can have a contagious effect on an organisation as a whole.

Categorising leadership tasks according to energy type

	Catabolic Leader	Anabolic Leader
Leads By	Default	Choice
Style	Negative, directs, governs, controls in action, dominates; tells what to do and how to do it; re-active, puts out fires as they arise	Positive, creative, inspires, guides in direction, sets personal example; requests or asks; plans ahead, knows what to achieve and how to get there; holds others accountable
Delegation	Transfers tasks; gets progress reports	Participates, frequent follow-up, pitches in, supports
Imparting Information	Gives or dumps information; does not translate information into context of team or individual tasks	Shares information and provides explanation to gain buy-in, which in turn builds trust
Self-Assessment	Operates within own little world without much thought to consequences of actions; does not ask for feedback from others; strong sense of being right	Wants to continue to grow and develop; solicits feedback from others; reflects and questions own approach
Managing Emotions	Thinks that emotions don't belong in the workplace; unaware of own and others' emotions as well as of the effect they have on others; doesn't want to deal with emotions; often expresses emotions inappropriately; cannot manage own emotions, thus people don't turn to them for guidance and support	Understands that emotions are an integral part of human nature; aware of own and others' emotions and that they arise from interpretations; is able to express emotions appropriately at the appropriate time; is able to manage own moods and control own emotions, even under bad conditions
Perspective	Focus is on problems, challenges are everywhere; might get angry or blame others for situation	Focus is on opportunity and possibility; takes action to capitalise on it
Outcomes	Principle of order and obedience; corporate culture based on fear	Collective leadership; culture of mutual respect, growth, and performance

Einstein's formula is finding new relevance through an innovative leadership concept which is redefining workplaces. The concept of Leadership Energy is based on seven levels of energy, which cover the range between the two ends of the energy spectrum. The highest levels of energy are anabolic, and associated with absolute passion, non-judgmental thinking, creation, solution-orientation and joy. The lowest levels are catabolic, and based on victim-thinking and the connected emotions such as anxiety, anger, low

self-esteem, disappointment and struggle. As we tackle today's social and economic challenges, having a better insight into who we are and how we tick can pay dividends in real economic terms. The concept of Leadership Energy offers executives this insight, as well as a working methodology to apply in the workplace.

UNDERSTANDING THE INTERPLAY OF THOUGHT, EMOTION AND ACTION Our thoughts, emotions and actions are the keys to understanding ourselves; they have a dedicated energy. Attitude is formed by a thought meeting a feeling, or vice versa. There are two pathways by which thought and emotion typically meet: 1) the mind thinks a thought, and that thought produces an emotion; 2) the body produces an emotion, and the mind thinks



a thought about that emotion. Action or decision takes place in the intersection where thought meets feeling, or feeling meets thought. Understanding the interactions of these thoughts, feelings and actions – in other words, enhancing our self-awareness – leads us to discover our own wealth of resources and power and to help others unleash their potential. By being aware of the consequences of our actions, behaviours and thoughts, we can reduce unnecessary drama in our lives, actively manage energy levels and consciously engage others to work together toward a joint cause.

THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP ENERGY ON THE CORPORATE CULTURE The ability to lead others starts with the ability to lead oneself. The more aware a leader is of her thoughts, emotions and actions, and their potential impact on the team and the organisation, the better she is able to shift her energy into more constructive and caring realms. When a manager limits her opportunities by thinking that there is nothing she can do about the current situation or constantly critiques executive decisions, she will not be able to whole-heartedly execute her team's deliverables.

However, once she realises that the outcome leaves room for improvement, she starts rationalising and taking responsibility for the task or project ahead. Thus, she moves into anabolic energy levels. The graph on the previous page presents an overview of how leadership tasks can be categorised according to energy type.

ENERGISE What does positive leadership energy aim to achieve? First, organisational energy begins with leadership energy. The potential for increasing the energy within an organisation resides within every employee, and tapping into and releasing that energy is a task for the organisation's leaders. If the leadership team is energised, the organisation will perform at higher levels. Employees will become inspired, passionate, and willing to go the extra mile. Energised employees, in turn, motivate customers to take their business relationship to the next level.

MANAGE AND LEAD "Managers do things right. Leaders do the right things." Managers play a vital role in steering organisational energy and whatever they do has an impact, whether positive or negative. Directional focus is the most important differentiator between a great manager and a great leader. Great managers look inward while great leaders, by contrast, look outward. An effective

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Two sides of the coin

- ➔ A destructive leader: has negative leadership style, gives information without context, doesn't think about consequences of actions, focuses on challenges, is emotionally unaware, practices a corporate culture of fear and transfers responsibilities
- ➔ A constructive leader is: positive, frequently participates, shares and explains information, solicits feedback with a view to growth, is emotionally aware, focuses on opportunities, and practices a culture of mutual respect
- ➔ Constructive leaders can provide better leadership energy, which contributes to revenue and profits
- ➔ Key traits of leadership energy are being communicative, visionary, open to dialogue, facilitating and full of integrity

organisation needs an integrated approach to managing and leading. Leadership skills provide the strategic direction and motivation, while management skills provide the systems and processes that let a company grow successfully.

INSPIRE Organisations have an incredible reservoir of positive energy waiting to be released. It is the task of the leader to find a way to tap into that energy, direct it and enable it to multiply throughout the organisation. A leader who inspires the organisation produces important – yet not always immediately tangible – outcomes: the organisation displays a climate of continuous learning and staff shows commitment, even when setbacks occur.

Leaders inspire by matching deeds to words, showing trust and confidence in staff, acknowledging

the contributions of others, providing staff with challenges, feedback, and support; and by being role models for creativity, innovation, and learning.

DEVELOP People learn from role models. Inspirational leaders see themselves as their team's coach: they are curious and listen actively to what their people say, provide them with genuine feedback and give them the time and space to experiment. They observe their team's interactions and positively reinforce cultural behaviours that enhance collaboration.

A WINNING ATTITUDE: LEADERSHIP ENERGY SKILLS In today's business climate, in which uncertainty is the new certainty, leadership energy is one of the few variables that can still be controlled in the drive for revenue and profits. Leadership energy stimulates connectedness and endorses collaborative behaviours, which in turn attract the best people. Once this is achieved on an ongoing basis, a perpetual machine is put in motion that forms the foundation of a collective corporate culture. Reinforcement of positive cultural behaviours is one of the most effective yet under-estimated and under-utilised levers executives have to help them

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deliver on the company's strategic objectives. The combination of a healthy company culture and a consistent strategy fosters innovation and creates a sustainable platform

for growth. Leaders and managers who demonstrate true leadership energy exhibit the following key traits. Here's what you can learn from them:

- They provide a vision for the future and share the passion they feel. As ambassadors for their cause, they give staff a vision of the big picture and where the company is headed. In doing this, they help employees to connect the dots and see how their everyday tasks contribute to the long-term perspective.
- They communicate, communicate, communicate. Good leaders involve their teams in formulating plans, pieces of the strategy or the overall vision so that there is immediate support from the start. They listen like a coach to what people want and need, observe interactions, provide feedback and reinforce collaborative behaviour.
- They are facilitators who strengthen connectedness within their teams and across the organisation. They allow transparency around the processes that lead to results and decisions and address critical issues immediately, involving the right people to solve them.
- They establish an environment of continuous improvement and open dialogue by providing opportunities for people to grow, both personally and professionally. They are caring and compassionate.
- They act with integrity. As Oscar Wilde put it, “Be yourself. Everyone else is taken”. Successful managers choose to lead and be the person others choose to follow, and are rewarded with trust and authenticity. They show courage, stamina, resilience and perseverance along the way.

In a nutshell: If you regularly reflect on your own thoughts, emotions and behaviours and how their interaction influences team performance and organisational culture, you will often find the answers you seek. The more positive leadership energy you demonstrate, the more successful your business will be and the smoother your own professional and personal career advancement. |



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